

DRAFT UNTIL APPROVED

MINUTES

REGULAR MEETING OF
CITY OF ALAMEDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
THURSDAY, APRIL 21, 2011
7:00 PM

(This meeting was held at the Hawthorn Suites Conference Room, 1628 Webster St., Alameda).

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Harrison called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

Present: Chair Harrison. Commission Members: McKean, Reeves, Richards, and Robillard

Absent: Commission Members: Dahlberg and Ryan

Vacancies: (2)

Staff: Eric Fonstein

2. MINUTES

2.a. Minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 17, 2011

Motion (McKean), seconded, and unanimous to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 17, 2011 as submitted.

3. CONSENT CALENDAR

(None)

4. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – PUBLIC

(None)

At the Chair's request, New Business was moved ahead of Unfinished Business.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.a. Appoint one EDC Member to the Webster Vision Implementation Committee

William DeMar, Chair of the West Alameda Business Association's (WABA's) Economic Redevelopment Committee, stated that the Webster Vision Implementation Committee meetings would be held quarterly, 12:30 to 2 p.m., on the second Wednesday of the month.

Motion (Harrison), seconded, and unanimous to appoint Commission Member Robillard to represent the EDC on the Webster Vision

Implementation Committee. Chairman Harrison agreed to be the alternate representative if needed.

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

5.a. Webster Street Vision Book Implementation

Mr. Fonstein recapped the staff report provided in the agenda packet regarding the implementation of the Webster Street Vision Book. He introduced William DeMar.

Mr. DeMar stated that the Vision Book provides a clear vision of the different options for Webster Street, and is intended to change the dynamics by identifying some of the impediments that can be removed. The “Grocery List” of action items range in scale from small to grand to help spur interest and development.

The Vision Book may also be given to prospective businesses looking to invest in Webster. Many properties on Webster Street are owned outright, so there is no debt. This creates no push to do anything. Mr. DeMar also stated that there are few incentives for somebody to come in due to the restrictions on building height and multiple residential units above retail.

WABA would like to see the zoning code changed to allow building height limits to equal Park Street (five stories, 60 feet) for the entire length of Webster Street. Considering the current vacancies on Webster, no one is going to build a 60-foot structure at this time; the market will take care of it, Mr. DeMar said. But Mr. DeMar emphasized that WABA needs to have these things in place in order to spur interest and development.

The Grocery List includes other “low hanging fruit,” such as sandwich boards and cleaning up the entryway from the Webster Tube. Mr. DeMar said currently there is no maintenance in place.¹ Larger items include creating a replica of the Neptune Beach Tower at Central Avenue using public art funds. A plan has been submitted.²

Commission Member Richards asked: how many five-story structures are there on Park Street. Mr. Fonstein answered the Theatre and parking structure. Mr. DeMar said that WABA could envision something similar at the entryway on Webster Street: a new hotel on the Days Inn property could go up to five stories. Moving further down the street, there is less

¹ The City’s Recreation and Park Department is responsible for mowing and maintaining the lawn areas at Neptune Park. Landscaping maintenance along Stargell Avenue is the responsibility of the City. The Public Works Department is entering into a cooperative agreement with Caltrans for maintenance of the State controlled right-of-way along Webster. The agreement is expected to go to the City Council later this spring.

² The City has hired a consultant to define a solicitation process for public art funding. Once the process has been approved, WABA may request solicitation of proposals and be placed on the list of potential public art funding projects.

likelihood of a five-story project. WABA's point is to allow five stories throughout the district so that if a project does come in that makes sense, the zoning code is already in place. On Webster Street, the biggest problem is no foot traffic, which will have to come with quality business that will attract the clientele that will spend money on the street.

Chairman Harrison asked, what is being done at Neptune Plaza with the condos blocking access to the beach. Mr. DeMar mentioned that the condos do not work with WABA.

Commission Member Reeves asked, what could be offered to Neptune Plaza so they would cooperate with WABA. WABA has tried many times over the years to meet, but hasn't been successful. Mr. DeMar said that it is more important for WABA to get 40 to 50 percent of the property owners involved. None of them cooperate. There needs to be significant changes for new money to come in, buy these properties, and redevelop them.

Chairman Harrison asked if WABA was keeping in contact with Catellus. Mr. DeMar answered yes. WABA is not unrealistic that Catellus may cause some pain to Webster. But the hope is that larger scale shopping happens at Alameda Landing and Webster keeps the small, independently-owned distinctiveness.

There are a lot of things that prohibit development in the District, such as Measure A and parking requirements.³

Commission Member Reeves asked about the new maintenance contract. Mr. DeMar said that it is working well. The contract is \$25,000 less than what WABA was paying before, but more than what the City takes in from Landscaping & Maintenance District fees. The cleaning is being done, and being done well.

Commission Member Reeves asked if there were any problems getting City cooperation on projects. Mr. DeMar answered that WABA had some problems with signage. WABA has a sign review committee in place to work with the City. In last two months, O'Reilly (formerly Kragen) Auto Parts and Mama's Chinese Noodle House were approved without WABA involvement.⁴

Mr. DeMar said that the Business District can't prohibit businesses, such as nail salons, but wants to make the quality of businesses meet a certain standard. The zoning code for nail salons has been changed from a permitted use to a conditionally permitted use so that the public may have some input. In addition, the conditional use permit has a \$1,600 fee, which

³ At its September 16, 2010 meeting, the EDC heard a presentation by Planning staff regarding the proposed changes to the Parking Ordinance, which have since been adopted by the City Council.

⁴ The Economic Development staff has met with new members of the Planning staff to review WABA's sign guidelines and to include the WABA Sign Committee in the approval process.

may discourage businesses with less financial resources. WABA is drafting a flow chart of the permitting process to identify access points for WABA to have some input.

Public Comment, Karen Bey: She suggested that Webster become a part of a redevelopment district, specifically Alameda Point's redevelopment district. Webster is a blighted area that has trouble attracting capital. It is important to have a strong, exciting main street associated with Alameda Point, especially to attract a campus/research facility like Lawrence Berkeley Lab's second campus.

Mr. Fonstein answered that Webster is currently in a redevelopment area; however, its future is uncertain due to the State budget discussions. The City's redevelopment agency has been working with property owners on projects in the District. In order to work on projects, the City needs to have a project from property owners or developers. It is more difficult for the City to initiate a project on its own, unless the City owns the project property. The City needs to have a partner to work with. It also has been difficult over the past few years to finance projects.

The Chair commended WABA for the work it does. This item was presented for information, only; no EDC action was requested.

5.b. Catellus/Alameda Landing Project Update

Steve Buster, Director of Development for Catellus, provided the status of the project. Mr. Buster said that Catellus wishes to "tweak" its development agreement by the end of this year with construction starting in 2012 and for Target to open in 2013.

Commission Member Reeves asked if Catellus is willing to work with WABA. Mr. Buster said yes, they are good friends. The tenants at Alameda Landing will be obligated to pay into WABA's Landscape and Lighting District, which will help Webster businesses. Catellus has agreements in place with WABA, such as protecting shop space along Webster. Catellus also wants to work with WABA to clean up the signage coming out of the Webster Tube to give clear direction to Webster Street.

Commission Member Reeves asked about joint advertising. Yes, said Mr. Buster, there is a lot of opportunities for collaboration between Alameda Landing and WABA. This project is intended to attract people from off the island and from the other side of the island to West Alameda. There is a lot of mutual interest between Alameda Landing and Webster Street. Mr. DeMar added that there is MOU, which restricts the size of the stores and stipulates that there will be no grocery store at Alameda Landing.

Commission Member Reeves asked if Target will be the first building. Mr. Buster said that Target will be the catalyst for the project. Catellus is struggling with how to make the waterfront area into a destination. The

agreement ties the waterfront development with the retail: Catellus has to know what to do with the waterfront when they break ground on retail.

Commission Member Reeves, have you strengthened the pilings? Mr. Buster said that they have done a lot research on it.

Commission Member Robillard asked how far out does the new wharf extend. Mr. Buster said not the entire wharf is involved; about 100 feet would be pulled back.

Chairman Harrison inquired about estimated cost of the pilings. Mr. Buster answered tens of millions of dollars. It was one of the reasons Catellus was unable to secure Clif Bar.

Public Comments.

- Joo Sun Lee. She had a Hawaiian clothing shop in Hawaii catering to tourists. She recommended that Webster Street have "open door" events with shops putting product displays on the sidewalk to create excitement.
- Sam Koka. As an Alameda resident, he said that it was about time to develop Alameda Landing. As a business property owner, he is concerned about the 18 vacancies on Webster Street. He would like to see Alameda Landing developed, but Webster needs help, too. In response to Commission Members' questions, Mr. Koka said that the City is helping him with his project. He said Measure A (housing restrictions) is the major impediment to Webster.
- Karen Bey. She is excited about Alameda Landing. She doesn't want to separate the timing of the waterfront development from the retail, especially since there may be opportunities with the America's Cup.
- Bill DeMar. WABA is here to start a dialogue. We've exhausted ideas for a catalyst. We need ideas of what can generate foot traffic. There is a lot of opportunity with Alameda Point and Alameda Landing, but he doesn't want Webster to get left out.

This item was presented for information, only; no EDC action was requested.

7. REPORTS

(None)

8. WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

8.a. Upcoming EDC Agenda Items

Mr. Fonstein noted that the presentation by the AMP General Manager has been rescheduled to May.

9. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – COMMISSION MEMBERS AND STAFF

Mr. Fonstein announced the following upcoming events:

- Argosy University Business Workshop, co-sponsored by the City of Alameda, April 26th;
- VF Outdoor Groundbreaking Ceremony, May 3rd; and
- Chamber of Commerce Business Expo, May 11.

Mr. Fonstein also reminded the Commission Members to turn in the Economic Interest Form 700 to the City Clerk's Office.

10. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was unanimously adjourned at 8:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Fonstein
EDC Secretary